

## **From the Pastor—April 22, 2018**

**Grell On Gospel** My priest-friend in the Arlington Diocese (VA) grew up on a sheep ranch in Texas, about 3.5 hours west of San Antonio. He sent me a picture this week from 1920, when his grandpa built a temporary bridge across the Rio Grande River to transport sheep from Mexico into their ranchland. My friend has taught me a lot over the years about the herding of sheep from his growing-up years, and about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. On this Fourth Sunday of Easter, we always hear Jesus speaking about being a shepherd. Why is that? He wants us to know how much he cares for each of us. He is not a hired man, a sheep “cowboy” so to speak, who works for hire. Rather, Jesus cares so much about each of us as his sheep that he would rather leave the 99 sheep in order to find the lost one. He does not want a wolf (i.e. worldly desires, the temptations of evil) to capture us and scatter us. So he protects and lets us know that we are important, that we are his sheep. Think of how good it is to have such a Good Shepherd!

**First Holy Communion Masses** Oh my, our weather continues to make us long for spring to finally be here and stay here! Our First Holy Communicants, however, did not let the cold and ice/snow deter their enthusiasm to receive the Lord Jesus for the first time in Holy Communion. We had practice on April 13 (Friday) in preparation for Sunday. At that time, the incoming storm was looming in the forecast. Some families had their loved ones driving into Hamilton County from elsewhere early in order to “beat the storm”. It was not really an option to postpone this special moment in our children’s lives, at least in my mind. I consulted with a brother priest, who was going ahead with First Holy Communion in his parish on the same day as ours. In the end, I think it all turned out well. I was so happy with our 13 children (11 in St. Mary’s and 2 from St. Joseph’s). Their families made it a special day for them in many ways. I pray that they know that the reception of Holy Communion puts them into the great adventure of life, which is more like running a marathon than racing a sprint. Receiving Jesus for the second holy time, the third holy time...for the 23<sup>rd</sup> or 157<sup>th</sup> holy time...will sustain them as they strive to love Jesus more and more. Please, let’s everyone in our parish families congratulate these young students and their families and encourage the young students to desire to receive Jesus more and more to build up strength for the adventure and marathon of this world. Because this adventure leads to the Kingdom of God...does anything else really matter? \*\*\* I want to thank Mrs. Lorena Rodriguez for teaching our First Holy Communion class. She was assisted by Mrs. Linda McQuiston and Mrs. Carey McCoy. I also thank our CCD co-coordinators, Mrs. Alison Morrow and Lorena. Msgr. James Reinert was also a big help to us for First Holy Confession and second penance received by the class.

**Visit St. Gregory Seminary in Seward!** On your journeys back and forth in the area, if you have cause ever to go through Seward or past the Seward exit on I-80, you ought to take some time to see our St. Gregory the Great Seminary. It is located 3 miles north of the I-80 Exit #379 and about 3 miles south of Highway 34 and the Seward County Courthouse. This coming Sunday would be a

great time to visit the seminary, as the Apostolic Nuncio will be blessing the new wing to the seminary which our Joy of the Gospel donations have helped to build. The nuncio’s name is the Most Rev. Christophe Pierre. If his Excellency’s name looks French, it is! A nuncio is the Pope’s direct representative in every country with which the Holy See (the Vatican) has official diplomatic ties. Think of the nuncio as being the ambassador of the Pope to the country he is assigned to. Pope Francis specifically chose Archbishop Pierre as our United States nuncio in 2015. He had previously served the same role in Mexico. A nuncio is often NOT the same nationality and citizenship as the country in which he serves. This, I suppose, gives him a fresh, unbiased viewpoint with which to serve that nation and inform the Holy Father about the Catholic Church in that country. So, please know that this Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, you are all invited to the seminary in Seward for the blessing of the new wing at 2:30 p.m. You could also stop by any time between 2:30 and 4:30 p.m. for an Open House. The seminary’s address is 800 Fletcher Road. Look for the Seward Wal-mart, and you’ll see the seminary located across Highway 15 from it. Please come!

**Charity and Stewardship Appeal** On Saturday, April 28 and Sunday, April 29, we will begin the pledge drive for our Diocese of Lincoln’s 48th annual Charity and Stewardship Appeal. This appeal, which is almost as old as me ☺, is something my parents have always been sure to support. It helps the parishes and ministries of the entire diocese each year. It is designed so that the majority of money raised is returned to the parishes in the diocese, while covering the costs of the appeal. Our goal for the whole Diocese is \$2.1 million; I will list our individual parish goals next weekend. Sixty-seven percent of the total diocesan goal, and anything received over the \$2.1 million mark, will go directly back to the parishes. The Charity and Stewardship Appeal allocates funds under the categories of “Proclaiming God’s Word,” which includes ministries such as the Family Life Office and Youth Ministry; “Works of Mercy” such as the diocese’s ministry to prisons, hospitals and nursing homes; and “Diocesan Ministries” such as the diocesan tribunal and religious sisters’ retirement. I am pleased to have serving as committee chairs for this year’s appeal in St. Mary’s Parish, Mr. Dan Meier and Mr. and Mrs. Brian and Alison Morrow; and in St. Joseph’s Parish, Mr. and Mrs. Ron and Cindy Consbruck.

**Homecoming!** My father came home on Wednesday! It had been five months and five days since his hip fracture injury occurred in November. I was able to go home and drive my mother into Beatrice, pack up Dad’s room in the Good Samaritan Society, and then drive them home to our family farm. Now, I want to emphasize that my parents and my siblings are pretty realistic, in so far as Dad being home will need to work out well for both him and Mother. She is 82; he is 90. They are both young of heart and probably feel half the age which they actually are. For now, they are ok being on the farm, sort of getting used to being together 24/7 again. Thank you for all your prayers; I know you have accompanied my family on this journey, and I appreciate it.

**God Bless You!**

**Father Grell**